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# GERMAN CAPABILITIES, NOVEMBER 1944

## Description

Assessments of the military, economic, and political factors affecting the German war potential at the present time.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Summary.....iii

I. Military and Economic Factors..... 1

A. Introduction..... 1

B. German Ground Strength..... 2

C. Petroleum..... 4

D. Armament Production..... 6

II. Political Factors.....10

A. Introduction.....10

B. The Bases for Popular Support of the Nazis.....10

C. Opposition Groups and Their Prospects.....10

1. The Military and Conservative Groups....11

2. German Workers.....11

3. Foreign Workers.....11

4. Other Potential Sources of Opposition...12

## SUMMARY

1. A quantitative reduction in the strength of the German ground forces by over 40 percent from June 1941 to November 1944 as a result of permanent losses, and a qualitative decline through increased use of older, less fit men and non-Germans have greatly reduced the fighting effectiveness of the German forces and rendered them vulnerable to sudden breakthrough.

2. Reduction of monthly output of petroleum products to a figure between 350,000 and 500,000 metric tons, only partly compensated by lower requirements resulting from territorial loss and retreat to denser rail networks, has required extreme measures to adjust current consumption to current production. While lack of petroleum is not likely to immobilize all German motorized equipment and bring about a sudden cessation of hostilities, it will be effective in sharply limiting the flexibility of German reaction if the Allies break through static positions and if rail lines behind the front are effectively impaired by air attack.

3. German capacity for the production of military equipment such as aircraft, tanks, and motor vehicles, inferior to that of the Allies, has been reduced by aerial attacks and will eventually be reduced even more sharply by loss of the resources of occupied countries. Germany's economic potential is well below the level required for the maintenance of her military strength: she will certainly not be able to increase the quantity and quality of her armament as compensation for decreased quality and numbers of combat manpower. Except in aircraft, tanks, and motor vehicles, the effects of insufficient production will be felt only gradually, but individual bottlenecks are likely to appear almost immediately and to grow

in number and in gravity.

4. The German home front is not believed to constitute a limitation on Germany's military effort. The cohesion of the Nazi state seems to rest on a broad measure of support from the German population and on the continued effectiveness of the Nazi control apparatus.

5. Popular support of the Nazis rests on acceptance of two major propositions of Nazi propaganda: that defeat, which the Nazi regime alone can prevent, would result in annihilation of Germany as a nation, and that continued resistance will permit emergence of conflicts between the Western powers and the USSR, out of which Germany will be able to obtain a compromise peace.

6. Potential opposition groups such as the military and conservative group responsible for the 20 July putsch, and German and foreign workers, as well as the less important potential antagonisms within the Nazi state such as those between the SS and the Wehrmacht, between the left and the right wings of the Nazi party, and between evacuees and the population in reception areas, are not expected to constitute decisive disintegrating forces prior to the destruction of the German army in the field.

# GERMAN CAPABILITIES, NOVEMBER 1944

## I. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

### A. Introduction

Germany made war against a group of countries with superior military potential in the hope that she could defeat these countries before their potential could be realized. Early German successes increased her command over the materials of war and the labor of occupied and satellite areas, but did not increase strength sufficiently to make German-controlled resources a match for those of her enemies. Meanwhile the mobilization of Allied strength continued until it was sufficient to reduce the bases of German military power and so further to increase Allied relative superiority. The process of reducing German strength has recently been very much accelerated and is now continuing at a rapid rate.

The principal factors limiting German strength are:

1. A limited and declining supply of manpower of combat quality, rendering German forces vulnerable to sudden breakthrough.

2. Sharply reduced petroleum supplies only partially compensated by a drop in requirements by reason of territorial loss and retreat to denser rail networks. Oil shortage will be especially effective in limiting the flexibility of German reaction if static positions are broken through and if rail lines behind the front are paralyzed.

3. Inadequate production of military equipment such as aircraft, tanks, and motor vehicles, further reduced by aerial attacks. Huge additional reductions of all armament production may eventually be expected as a result of loss of the resources of occupied territories. Except for air-

craft, tanks, and motor vehicles, the effects of insufficient production will be felt only gradually.

These three factors are discussed in the three sections immediately following.

B. German Ground Strength

The German armed forces are at present engaged on fronts of roughly 2,700 miles. Heavy losses of the past three years have greatly reduced the fighting effectiveness of the German forces, while the Allied powers in that time have enormously strengthened their forces in the field against the Germans. During this same period, the Germans have lost formerly extensive areas which shielded the vital centers of German power from direct attack. This development, as well as the development of decisive superiority of the Allies in every arm, has deprived the German command of strategic initiative, and has to a considerable extent impaired the tactical efficiency of the German forces. The decline in German army strength from its point of maximum effectiveness is in part indicated in the following table showing, at various dates, the number of divisions of the German armed forces in the several categories, and actual strength in millions of men:

| | Armored Divs. | Motorized Divs. | First-Line Infantry Divs. | Second-Line Divs. | Actual Strength in millions of men | First-Line Combat Personnel in millions of men |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| June 1941 | 20 | 20 | 180 | 80 | 7.2 | 6.8 |
| March 1943 | 27 | 19 | 140 | 94 | 6.2 | 5.3 |
| June 1944 | 31 | 14 | 167 | 100 | 5.1 | 3.4 |
| November 1944 | 27 | 11 | 117 | 95 | 3.9 | 2.5 |

Largely because of casualties on the Eastern Front, permanent losses of the German ground forces since June 1941 had, by 1 November 1944, reached a total of 7,000,000 men, of whom only 3,700,000 have been replaced, thus reducing the strength of the ground forces by over 40 percent. In addition to this quantitative decline there has also been a deterioration in quality of personnel of the German forces through an increased use of older, less fit men, and of non-Germans.

While the proportion of over-age and second-quality troops in the German army has greatly increased, the opportunities of the German Command for effective use of second-quality troops have been reduced through the loss of territory and seacoasts. For example, before the Allied landings in France, the German Coast Defense divisions were valuable insofar as they were a hazard to landing operations and imposed on the Allied Command the necessity for expensive and time-consuming preparations adequate to the worst contingencies. Second-line divisions were also effective in the occupation of conquered territories; now freed from that use, they are suitable for limited use only, even in fortified positions. It seems likely that the much-publicized formation of Volksgrenadier divisions merely represents the application of an inspiring name to improvised divisions in order to bolster their elan. They cannot be used to good effect in the field against first-class combat divisions. Coast Defense divisions have been deprived of function, and the type of personnel in these divisions is not suitable for incorporation in the combat divisions upon which must rest the final defense of Germany.

It is apparent from the German discussion of the formation of the Volkssturm, particularly the comments of Dittmar, that the Volkssturm is not intended to be integrated into the regular army. The Germans hope to be able to use the Volkssturm as state auxiliaries in the defense of their own localities. Such troops will lack mobility and will, at best, make a minor contribution to German defense.

Concomitant with the loss of men and the partial substitution of qualitatively inferior soldiers, the proportion of immobile divisions in the German ground forces has been increased. As a result of these developments, as well as a shortage of oil and possibly of military equipment, the German army will be especially at a disadvantage if its present positions are broken through. In that case it will be hampered by the lack of ample reserves for successful counter attack and by lack of mobility sufficient to reform lines after withdrawal. The latter will be true especially if the excellent railroad system behind the lines should be effectively impaired by aerial attack.

C. Petroleum

A general oil shortage is also contributing to a steady decline of German military capabilities. Even in 1943, when production and consumption in German-controlled Europe were in balance at the relatively high average level of 1.3 million metric tons per month, allocations for war industry and essential transportation and for certain military purposes, especially air training, were insufficient to meet urgent needs. At this time many army-supply vehicles were converted to substitute fuels, despite the serious disadvantages accompanying the use of these fuels. Monthly production of finished petroleum products has now been reduced,

chiefly by Allied bombardment, to a figure between 350,-000 and 500,000 tons, and maintenance of the present scale of Allied air attacks should hold production at this level. Because stocks are very low, it has been necessary to adjust current consumption to current production. Such a reduction could not have been achieved without a drastic reduction of commitments, that is, it would have been impossible to maintain operations on the extended fronts of 1943 with oil supplies at the present level. Even though the shortening of the front lines, the loss of conquered and satellite countries, and the inability to replace a large part of the losses of motorized equipment have led to a considerable decline in requirements, it has not been possible to reduce consumption to the present level of about 500,000 tons per month without the most extreme measures.

The effects of these measures have been visible for some time: in Germany road transportation by gasoline and Diesel vehicles has virtually ceased, affecting distribution of the necessities of life and movement of supplies for war production; production of military equipment has been delayed by transportation problems and by lack of fuels for testing; agricultural production has been hampered by fuel shortages; training of air crews and of armored-force personnel has been further curtailed and is revealed at the fronts by the poor quality of replacements; captured documents revealing the conversion of all but front-line army motorized equipment clearly shows the desperate urgency of conserving motor fuel; and at the fronts operational shortages have been increasingly frequent, owing partly to the inability to build up dumps

large enough to tide units over periods when their supply lines have been cut. In addition, there is evidence that the flow of products between refineries or synthetic plants and the fronts now amounts to only two weeks' to a month's supplies, so that successful attacks on productive facilities, such as those of early September, show up in operational shortages at the front a few weeks later.

It is not likely, however, that lack of oil will immobilize all German motorized equipment and bring about a sudden cessation of hostilities. Rather, the relative inferiority of the German armies will be intensified and their ability to wage large-scale mobile warfare will progressively decline. The logic of the German position compels them, therefore, to seek reduction of their vulnerability by a stabilization of fronts in areas with dense railroad nets; it is only by imposition of positional warfare upon the Allies that the Germans can economize their limited supplies of motorized equipment and oil and to some extent neutralize the superiority of the Allies in all categories of military strength. Should the Allies succeed in breaking through German positions, there is no doubt that oil shortages will seriously handicap the Germans in meeting or containing the Allied thrusts.

D. Armament Production

German industrial capacity for the production of armaments is considerably inferior to that of her enemies. In addition, Germany is conspicuously deficient in most of the important materials required in a war economy, (with the outstanding exception of coal) so that it has been only with difficulty that Germany has maintained an adequate supply of raw materials for her industrial capacity. The resources

of the occupied and satellite countries, however, helped to fill the gap between Germany's supply of raw materials and her industrial capacity; to a large extent the remaining shortages were met by extensive development of substitutes and synthetics.

The loss of occupied and satellite territories and the continued effects of Allied air attacks have reduced German economic potential well below the level required for the maintenance of her military strength. Germany certainly will not be able to increase the number and quality of her armament as compensation for decreased quality and numbers of combat manpower. However, materials in process, and stocks on hand, as well as reduction of long-term uses of scarce materials, should cushion the general effects for over six months. Individual bottlenecks are likely to appear almost immediately, however, and they will gradually grow in number and in gravity.

The effects of German productive inferiority in strength and activity are most clearly apparent in the case of aircraft, production of which has been greatly restricted by Allied air attacks. Although aerial bombardment has not prevented an increase in German plane production, the increase has been much less than was otherwise within German planned capability. First-line strength, especially of single-engine fighters, has also increased, but GAF activity is limited by inability to replace the high wastage that would be suffered as a result of aggressive tactics against highly superior Allied air forces. Front-line strength is consequently no longer a good measure of the combat value of the GAF.

Many bombing missions now fail to bring out any

serious German resistance; only on clear days and during deep penetration can German fighters be expected to come out in strength.[1] Over the Western Front German air activity is not usually an important factor, except in special cases such as the struggle for the Arnhem pocket. In short, the GAF can no longer be considered as a force constantly opposing Allied strength, but only as a weapon held in reserve for occasional use when either an Allied threat or Allied vulnerability appears to justify its large-scale employment.

German tank production is also very much below that of the Allies, although the practical consequences of this productive inferiority are not so clearly visible as in the case of aircraft. German production has been steadily increasing, at least up to the middle of 1944, but successful attacks on engine and gear works, as well as on tank assembly plants may have reversed that tendency. In any case it is unlikely that the Germans can afford tank wastage at all comparable with Allied production.

An insufficient pool of motor vehicles is also likely to hamper German military mobility. Current inflow of new motor vehicles has been reduced not only by bombing but also by loss of the large motor-vehicle production of the formerly occupied areas of Western Europe. Meanwhile the German motor-vehicle pool has been depleted by high combat-wastage accelerated by defeats and aerial inferiority.

In addition to these conspicuously limited items there can be expected a general increase in the number of bottlenecks in the German military situation. Although the full impact of the loss of the resources of occupied territories

1. A single notable exception to this must be regarded as an unsuccessful German experiment.

can be long delayed, nevertheless the constant adjustment of resources to requirements that is characteristic of any war economy will become more and more difficult in Germany. Points of strain will be multiplied, and maladjustments will everywhere increase in number and gravity.

## II. POLITICAL FACTORS

### A. Introduction

The German home front is not believed to constitute a limitation on Germany's military effort. The cohesion of the Nazi state, notwithstanding the attempted putsch of 20 July, seems to rest on (1) a broad measure of support from the German population; and (2) the continued effectiveness of the Nazi control apparatus in preventing dissident groups from translating opposition into action, or even from effectively communicating their dissidence to other elements of the population.

### B. The Bases for Popular Support of the Nazis

The German government seems to enjoy the general support of the population at large for the continuation of resistance, despite a large and growing realization that the war is lost. This support rests on public acceptance of two major propositions of Nazi propaganda:

1. That a German defeat would involve the complete annihilation of Germany as a nation, and that the Nazi regime is the only one which has the power and determination to prevent the enemy from achieving this objective; and

2. That a continuation of resistance will permit the emergence of the "natural" conflicts between the Western powers and the USSR, and that out of these conflicts Germany will be able to obtain a compromise peace.

### C. Opposition Groups and Their Prospects

Opposition groups potentially capable of action against the Nazis are not expected to constitute decisive disintegrating forces prior to the destruction of the German army in the field.

The chief potential opposition groups and their prospects are:

1. The Military and Conservative Opposition. The group responsible for the putsch of 20 July, composed of certain high army officers, civil servants, businessmen, and perhaps some trade-union leaders, continues to exist. However, the success of the Nazi machinery in coping with the putsch and its aftermath has probably discouraged the opposition from renewed action in the near future. Moreover, in reaction to the putsch, the Nazis have considerably tightened and centralized their control over the home front. This process includes increased power for Himmler over the military; replacement of Wehrmacht generals by SS leaders; exclusive Party control over the Volkssturm; and arrest and liquidation of former and potential opposition leaders.

2. German Workers. Intelligence reports continue to describe an underground opposition located chiefly in the industrial centers. It does not appear to be of sufficient strength to represent an effective political force prior to German collapse.

On the other hand, there are indications that the discipline of the working class is weakening. Increasing fraternization between German and foreign workers and absenteeism facilitated by the air war constitute problems for the Nazi authorities, and suggest deterioration in worker morale which may assume a political character during the last stages of Germany's defeat. The Nazi control apparatus is, however, still effective enough to prevent any large-scale action, which is further impeded by the physical and mental exhaustion of the working population.

3. Foreign Workers. During recent months, the Nazis have intensified their policy of conciliating foreign workers. The most provocative measures of discrimination have been abolished

and, by and large, the foreign workers have been put on the same level as their German colleagues. This policy is believed to have succeeded in pacifying a part of the foreign workers. Otherwise, the Nazi control apparatus exercises strict and efficient supervision.

4. Other Potential Sources of Dissidence. There are several other antagonisms within the Nazi state such as those between the SS and the Wehrmacht, between the left and the right wings of the Nazi party, and between evacuees and the population in reception areas. None of these antagonisms, however, seems strong enough to endanger the national cohesion of the Nazi system.